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UNDER THE YELLOW FLAG

By KATHERINE MAYO

THE yellow flag was flying in Franklin County. Over those beautiful hill-sides a deadly wave of smallpox was creeping, as bush-fires creep in the fall. The thing had begun in one remote village, had gained headway before it was noticed, and now, with its out-reaching tentacles, spread fear in the land.

Dr. Dixon, the Health Commissioner, had sent his Assistant Chief Medical Inspector to stamp out the scourge, and the Assistant Chief, Dr. J. C. Hunt, wise, vigorous and full of nerve, was exactly the sort of a man for the task. He promptly took all the steps that the emergency indicated. He identified the infected houses, declared them quarantined, explained to the inmates and to the people at large the meaning and necessity of the measure. And then, to insure strict observance of rules, he swore in a large number of local residents to act as guards, and gave them deputy's authority.

The best element in the communities came forward for this service, appreciating its literally vital importance as the less intelligent classes could not do. And then the doctor and his assistants started in to vaccinate the countryside while there was yet time.

But they did not believe in vaccination. More than that, they believed it bad. Whole villages united in common outcry against it. Evasion, passive resistance, could not content them here. They would run away from the doctors, simply, but if the doctors used Lem Patterson and his guards to capture and hold them, then they would fight. And fight they did, with such arms as they possessed.

Moreover, now that the ice was broken, they brought their arms into wider employ. They attacked the doctor's guards set upon infected houses and drove them away with shotgun fire. Then they paraded out openly by the front-

door, such of them as were well enough to walk, and went where they pleased. And the discomfited citizen guards threw up their jobs.

"We don't mind the work," said they to the doctor. "We'd be glad to do that. But we do object to being the helpless targets for guns. And the whole thing's a farce, anyway. You can't control the situation. The disease will run its course."

Incidentally, the course on which it was embarked involved a peculiar threat. Raging first in the towns and hamlets, it had spread through scattering settlements, and thence abroad over the hills. Directly in its line of progress rose Mont Alto. And on Mont Alto stands the State's greatest tuberculosis Sanatorium, with its hosts of sick. Smallpox introduced into that dense throng would be horrible beyond words, and smallpox was drawing nearer to it every day and hour. Under such pressure, and after it had exhausted all the means at its own command the Health Department appealed to the Department of State Police.

On May 20th, three men from "D" Troop arrived on the scene. Eleven days later four men from "B" Troop were sent to re-enforce them, the combined details thenceforth working under command of Private William A. Kane, late Corporal 21st United States Infantry.

The men were generally quartered in Waynesboro, the most central available point in the infected field. At once they laid hold on their task in the Force's fashion, while the late citizen guard stood by and watched them work. Their first step was to look over the situation and master its details. This, because of their training, they could do with speed, so that Trooper Kane was shortly in a position intelligently to organize and put his system in motion.

At six o'clock in the morning, as the plan worked, the Troopers rode out on patrol. Their route covered thirty-four miles. At ten o'clock at night the day patrol returned to quarters. At ten o'clock at night the night patrol rode out, returning to quarters at six in the morning. The men were all in uniform and, by constantly varying their route and the hour of their appearance at any given point, they contrived to make their scanty numbers tell to the greatest advantage.

But another influence worked with them, far more potent than numbers. Another power hovered over them,

immeasurably strengthening their hands. They rode surrounded with the prestige of their fame.

This was the county that had bled and paid and bitten the dust for year on year at the whim of Israel Drake and of Carey Morrison. These were the men—these silent men in sombre uniform, these “State Wildcats,” these “Black Hussars,” who with a single stroke had delivered the country from Drake and Morrison as a child is delivered from a bad dream.

“If the State Police want a man out of here they send him a postcard and he comes in,” the saying ran. Quietly and without debate the people obeyed the State Police.

So the citizen guard, having made its observations, came back to the doctor, and said: “Now we will work with you, and do our best. We are satisfied that no one will attack us while the Troopers are on the job.”

The accession of this aid facilitated the Troopers’ work. The citizen guards were in the main reliable and intelligent. Under proper protection they were efficient.

The local authorities now placed them wherever cases or contact cases were known to exist, and the Trooper patrols, arriving at unexpected moments, day or night, to inspect each post, inspired vigilance in the guards as well as obedience in the guarded. By this means, the Troopers soon learned not only which of the deputies could really be trusted, but also which of the infected families were sufficiently intelligent and conscientious to be left unwatched. Once assured of this latter point, they procured the removal of the guard, liberating him for real service elsewhere.

Accompanying the Health Department doctors on trips of investigation, they saved much precious time merely by the attitude that their presence inspired. Again, they escorted the doctors on vaccination tours, producing orderly submission where without them no vaccination could have taken place. Often, at first, parents would send their children out into the woods to hide, at the news of the doctor’s approach. Discovering this, the Trooper escort would lead the doctor away on his route and then, by a quick reverse, would bring him back through the woods to the house. By this means they would catch the children returning to their homes, and then and there care for them. Often, also, it was necessary for the Trooper to

stand by the patient's side, in an infected house, while the doctor worked, and thus each man in the detail became familiar with every aspect and care of the disease.

The knowledge was of inestimable value to them later on, as they extended their patrols into districts too sparsely settled or too distant for the busy doctors to visit except on positive knowledge of need. As they rode over the mountain trails, from cabin to cabin, or across country among the scattered valley farms, they took pains to acquaint themselves, in their friendly way, with the composition and the individuals of each household. When one was missing, they enquired where he had gone. If they learned or suspected that he was ailing, they managed a glimpse of him, and then their knowledge of the disease told them how to act.

Daily, as they discovered the presence either of the sickness or of contact cases, they were obliged to impose quarantine on new houses. And in remote points the imposition, so necessary to the general welfare, would have worked great hardship but for the passings of the patrol. The Trooper, on his daily round, would stop to enquire the condition and needs of the family, and would see, moreover, that those needs were supplied. He would get the message to the grocer or the druggist in the nearest settlement, and, whatever might have been his action otherwise, no grocer, druggist or any other purveyor neglected a request made through the State Police.

In the course of this work, the Troopers acquired a minute knowledge of the entire country-side, and found and relieved many cases of acute suffering and destitution that must otherwise have gone on to a pitiful end.

Thus, early one morning, Trooper Kane was circling about the Mont Alto Sanatorium, on a five-mile radius, when he came upon a trail that suggested a dwelling somewhere back in the woods. Following it, he discovered a little frame house hidden away in the brush. It was paintless, grey and weatherbeaten. A gnarled old apple-tree spread its arms before it, as though to protect it with the outreaching hopes and care of an earlier and happier generation. But the little farming that had been done around it, by weedy and stunted rows, by sickly growths and crooked planting, told its own story of discouragement, weakness and lack.

As Trooper Kane reined up his horse at the opening of the trail, and stood for an instant quietly looking at the house, its door opened and a man came out. He was a young man, dressed in the mountain garb. His attitude bespoke utter misery. Without so much as a glance about him, he dropped down on the step and buried his head in his hands.

"Good morning!" called Trooper Kane, riding closer.

The man raised his head. His eyes were full of fever. The mark of the pest was upon him, strong and beyond dispute. But he made no reply.

The Trooper bethought himself. This must be the man he had heard about, down at the valley blacksmith shop—the trapper who had lived here all his life alone, until, some eight months since, he had married and brought the girl home to his solitary abode.

"How's your wife?" the Trooper essayed.

The question unlocked the other's lips. "She's sick!" he moaned, "awful sick. She's got a terrible pain in her side. And we ain't got no food in the house at all. And—I don't know what's come over me—but I can't seem even to tote my gun to go hunt a little meat for her. She's starving."

Again his head dropped into his hands, his fingers clenched weakly in his sunburnt hair. The tears were splashing slowly on the door-step.

"Cheer up!" said the Trooper. "I'll see to this. Do you have a family doctor?"

"No."

"Where does the nearest doctor live?"

"Down in Quincy. But he won't come here. I've sent for him different times, but he always says no. He knows we can't pay."

"How about groceries? Where do you deal?"

"We ain't got no money left, I tell ye. We can't get groceries nowhere, nor nothin' else."

Trooper Kane knew that the State Doctor could not be brought to that remote point before late afternoon; knew also that this household must be relieved immediately; further, that it lay outside of the confines of Franklin County, in the County of Adams.

So, hastening to the nearest telephone, he called up the

Poor Department of Adams County, and officially notified it to send out a doctor and supplies at once.

The Doctor, on his arrival, diagnosed the girl's trouble as appendicitis in an advanced stage, and confirmed the Trooper's judgment of the ailment of the husband. He then assumed general charge. But it remained incumbent upon the State Police, nevertheless, to see to the maintenance of quarantine.

Next day the sick girl died.

And then it appeared that all the mountain-side, that had taken no thought of her while she lived, that would have let her die of starvation, was bent on coming to her funeral! Now, half this ambitious public either actually had smallpox in a light form, or had been so much exposed to it as to be dangerous. Should such an assemblage take place, the other half could scarcely fail to be infected. Trooper Kane therefore forbade the funeral party. But, knowing the passion of the mountain-folk for that form of gathering, he dared not trust to their obedience. So he arranged that his best citizen allies should be stationed at the graveyard, in numbers sufficient to control the mountaineers should they try to break through by force; and that others, meantime, should guard the infected house from curious visitors.

But now, as the hour drew near, the husband himself complicated the case, entreating to be allowed to go to the grave. "Seems like I *couldn't* let no one else touch her," he moaned.

"Do you think it could be done?" asked the Trooper, moved by that piteous grief.

"Well," growled the doctor, "he'd have physical strength enough and plenty, with the desire that's in him. But you know the danger as well as I do."

"I wish we could fix it, somehow. It surely is hard!"

"I'll tell you," the Doctor conceded. "If you want to go with him yourself and see not one soul comes near, I'll say yes."

"All right, I'll do that much for the poor chap. Will you get word to the guards at the graveyard that they're dismissed, and tell them to tell the people I'm taking their place."

"I'll do it myself," said the Doctor, and hurried away.

The trapper owned no kind of wagon. All his little

journeyings had been made on foot, or on the back of an old saddle horse, his wife riding pillion behind him. For work about his place, he had used a drag, such as Indians make of long sapling poles, two ends serving as shafts while the other two rest on the ground, supporting the burden between them. Today it must serve for another purpose. There was nothing else to use.

Green branches lay in a heap by the doorstep. He had gone to the heart of the wood for them and had chosen the freshest. Now he led out his horse, harnessed between the shafts of the drag. Over its rough lashings he spread the boughs orderly, standing back to survey them with anxious eyes, covering here the brown of a branch, there taking away an imperfect leaf, while the Trooper, waiting apart, looked on in silence. At last, his preparations done, he disappeared into his house and shut the door. Some moments passed without sound from within. Then the door opened, and the trapper came forth, bearing his dead in his arms. No need to ask whence came his strength to do it. Gently he laid her down on the boughs, tenderly he disposed her dress, and touched her soft yellow hair with his trembling fingers. There she lay, among the leaves of oak and ash, and the flowering laurel branches, her long hands folded on her breast, her young face turned up to the blue sky, white as the floating clouds and as peaceful.

A moment the two stood looking at her there. Then the sick man turned to the Trooper.

"I guess we'll be goin'," said he. "Come, Jim." And the old horse started down the leafy trail.

Where has been seen a procession more touching? Under the arching green of hemlock and birch, over grey stones and thick, soft mosses, the ancient horse, lean, sunken-eyed, moving slowly with hanging head. At his bridle a man of body sick unto death, of heart more desolate, a man poor and weak and pitiful always. Then the couch of green boughs and rosy blossoms and the dead girl lying on it, sweet and holy, her white face turned to the sky. And last their one friend on earth—the tall young soldier in his rigid, faultless uniform, brave and kind and very sad and reverent, speaking power from every line of his clean, hard limbs and his strong, intelligent, trust-inspiring face. So the branches close behind them, over

the narrow trail, and they pass slowly on, unseen, to the burial place.

In the little mountain grave-yard, they found the grave dug, ready, a spade left sticking in the fresh earth heaped at its side. On the verge stood a rough pine box, its lid loose, a hammer and nails upon it.

Once more the sick man lifted his dead, and laid her down in that rude coffin, with the oak and the ash beneath her and the laurel near her face. Then the soldier nailed the lid fast, and so they two together lowered the coffin into its place. No clergyman was there, no minister, only those two, with old Jim and the dead.

They looked at each other, hesitating.

"I wish there could ha' been something said" . . . murmured the man sick of a fever, his cracked lips quivering.

. . . "Couldn't you say a prayer?" ventured the other.

"I never knowed a prayer in all my life. But—she'd ha' wanted it . . . she'd ha' wanted it bad."

Then the Trooper knew what was required of him. In the many years of his service his duty had come in multitudinous shapes, cast by the multitudinous sudden needs of the people. But this one thing had never come before. An enormous diffidence engulfed him, in which his brain gasped and drifted. But there lay that poor, bare coffin, waiting in the grave, and there were the hungry helpless eyes of the man fixed upon him. He started back, blankly. He could not refuse. But where were the words? Where? . . . Then, like a fragment out of a dream he saw himself kneeling at the chancel rail, the chalice passing, heard the voice of the celebrant.

"I can only remember one little one . . ."

"*Please!*"

So the young soldier bared his head and knelt, the other following. Very slowly he spoke—very clearly, very reverently:

"The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.' Amen."

"Amen," echoed the sick man. Then he turned away and covered his ears with his hands, while the Trooper grasped the spade.

Endless were the deeds of mercy that the patrols performed, while riding their long tours through regions but for them unvisited; merciful the order that they imposed, checking the spread of disaster. But the work, for themselves, was heavy. As to the horses, only by the best of care could they have borne such taxing.

At ten o'clock every night, at six o'clock every morning, when the patrols came off duty, each man worked long on his horse, rubbing him, bathing him, bandaging his legs, before giving a thought to his own comfort. And then, very frequently, when the horse was at ease, the man would start away on foot in pursuit of some extra service, unrelated to the quarantine work, and therefore to be undertaken only outside the hours of quarantine duty.

Acting according to the principle of the Force, Trooper Kane encouraged his men, on patrols, not to be content with the simple duty of the moment, but to take every opportunity to inform themselves of the character, general and particular, of the people among whom they passed. Stopping at the store, or the blacksmith shop, calling on the doctor, they were tactfully to feel out the personnel of the place. What wrongs had been done there in recent times? Who had gone to prison and why? In what manner had he done his deed?—down to the last detail. If he had since been released, what was his subsequent history?

All these matters the Trooper led his men to relate and talk over together when they met, at meals or elsewhere, in order to increase their general knowledge and to store their minds for future need. For it is a fact known to criminology that a man's style in crime is almost as distinctive as his style in handwriting. The whole State was the province of these young officers of the law, and it behooved them to learn all that they could of the person and habits of every criminal therein.

Then the people themselves, appreciating their rare opportunity, and believing, apparently, that State Police officers were immune from need of sleep or rest, brought them a hundred requests for help in matters that they knew not how otherwise to handle.

A matter that cost them many a period of the sleep they had so richly earned by long, hard hours of patrolling, was the arrest of one Bill Barnes, undertaken at the

request of the local authorities. Bill Barnes was the gadfly of his people—a sort of stinging will-o'-the-wisp, not deadly as yet, but irritating, destructive, subversive of peace. Many warrants were out against him, for assault and battery, malicious mischief, robbery, but to serve those warrants was beyond the ability of the local powers. His delight was to terrorize the women at the times when the men were away at work—to enter their houses and demand food at the revolver's point. He revelled in sudden appearances at farmers' outdoor festivals, at church lawn-parties and the like, when, for example, he would swagger into the place, seize an ice-cream saucer from the hands of a girl, whirl it high into the air, shoot it to bits as it whirled, kiss the girl, help himself to what he liked, shoot all the glasses from the telephone poles, and be off at his own good will, protected by his proven skill in the arms he brandished.

He came of respectable village parentage, but his fancy was for the hills. He knew every trail in the mountains, and lived among the heights for considerable periods without any other shelter than such as he made from night to night of fresh-cut boughs. On the lower slopes, in the valleys, he was as wary as a bird. In the high forest he mocked all pursuers. Moreover, when there, he was beyond any constable's jurisdiction.

If the Troopers, one or two of them, could have settled down to uninterrupted attention to the trial of Bill Barnes, it would have been another matter. But they could chase him only at intervals, when off quarantine patrol, when in the time allotted them for sleep. Night after night, following some word of his whereabouts, the men off duty jumped out of their beds and raced away in the dark. They could not use their horses, of course, for the horses must have their scanty rest; and this added to the handicap.

All this contributed hugely to the gaiety of Bill Barnes. Often he would stop farmers on some lonely road, relieve them of their tobacco and odd cash, and instruct them to carry an invitation to the State Troopers to come to an indicated point that night and take him. Often again, he would actually accompany his own pursuers on a parallel line within the forest, observe their every move, and send them a jeering report of it afterward.

So, late one afternoon, word came to the Troopers' lodgings that Bill Barnes was in the vicinity of Beartown.

The night patrol, off duty, led by Trooper Kane, immediately started for that region,—a part into which their work had not led them before. Making inquiries, they presently established the probable general location of their man. He was flying lower than was his habit, down on the tilled lands.

On this somewhat vague information, the detail was cutting across country when one of the men caught a glimpse that gave him pause. Through a break in the foliage, he could see a wheat-field, some eight acres broad. It covered a little hillock running up neatly from every side to a central height. Capping the height rose a great chestnut tree. In the topmost crotch of the chestnut, silhouetted against the sky, perched a man, busy about some small handiwork.

"That's no natural sight," said the officer to himself, and he pointed it out to the rest.

"I'll try stealing up on him," said Trooper Kane.

Softly, softly he stalked him, as he had learned to stalk in the Philippine bush. But the eyes of the tree-man roved all abroad. He saw his pursuer when the latter was yet three thousand yards or more away. Like a flash he slid out of the tree, fleetly crossed the field, disappeared in the wood and, a few minutes later was screaming defiance from a high ledge far above.

"Come up and get me, you snails! You'll never get Bill Barnes!"

"He's right," said Trooper Kane to the rest. "We'll never catch him like this. With three minutes' start he can lose us in these woods any time. Moreover, we mustn't hunt him every day. It keeps him too much on guard. But let's go over and see what he was doing up that tree, before we quit."

Under the tree, with some oily rags, lay other traces that told what had busied the bird that had flown. He had been cleaning his gun.

Now, Bill had a brother, who lived in the mountain heights. His house stood in a small clearing cut out of the thick forest, and here, it was known, Bill sometimes came for food. The dense brush and timber that surrounded the place on three sides offered such facile escape, in the unlikely case of need, that he felt but little danger there. So Trooper Kane, informed of the fact, now turned to the

farmers on the encompassing slopes with the request that they send him word when they had knowledge of Bill's presence in his brother's house.

Willing enough they were to help, for all had suffered petty robberies, insolences and fright at Bill Barnes's hands. The women in especial were keen to aid. And so it was by a farmer's wife that Trooper Kane was called to the telephone one morning not long afterward. "Bill Barnes has just gone up to his brother's place," said she. "Coming up the mountain just now, I saw him cutting across a clearing straight that way."

Private Rose lay on his cot. He had been out on a more than commonly long and stiff patrol, and was now deep in his second hour's sleep.

"Rose!" said Kane.

"Huh?"

"Bill Barnes!"

Rose resurrected himself from the nethermost depths. It was like pulling the bottom out of the sea. "Bill Barnes?" said he. "All right. Just let me put my head under the pump."

Meantime Kane was considering; he wanted a disguise that would carry him unsuspected into hands' reach of his man. Up in the hills to the south of the point where Barnes was now supposed to be, lay the town of Penmar, astride the Pennsylvania-Maryland line. In summer Penmar was much frequented by Baltimoreans, including many college boys. And these people, in driving about over the mountains, not infrequently used the road that led past Bill's brother's house.

"We must get into civilian clothes," said Kane. Then they went out and bought themselves caps such as the holiday boys at Penmar were wearing, hired a horse and buggy at the livery stable, and started up into the heights.

As they neared their general field Kane, who was driving, turned and inspected his companion with more critical care. Dissatisfaction lingered in his look.

"Somethin's wrong with you, Rose," he said, at last. "I can't make out just what. Yes! That's it! Your shoulders. Can't you do something to them? Slouch, man! Take the life out of your spine."

Rose did his best to obey, but he, too, was staring critically at his comrade. "I don't know that Bill would

notice it," said he, "but your face is all wrong. Can't you make your mouth sort of pulpy? And look fluffy all over? Like, as Mr. Muldoon says, you were ninety per cent foolishness and ten per cent meat?"

Kane grinned. "I'll try that, too," said he. "It doesn't sound hard. Now we must sing. We can't, but we've got to. *No!* 'He may be a brother to William H. Taft' won't do. Sing 'Old Black Joe.' All together!"

Carolling idly, they approached the house, passed it with no more than the casual glance of the strolling explorer, and drove on for a quarter of a mile beyond. There they turned, still singing, and retraced their route.

"This gives 'em a chance to have thought us over and sized us up," said Kane. Now they'll make up their minds that we're only harmless youngsters from Penmar and won't suspect us. Whereas, if we'd got out of the buggy the first time past, Bill, if he's there, would have been off and away into the woods in no time."

Once more in front of the house they stopped, leisurely alighted, and made for the two doors. Kane taking the front, Rose the rear. They entered simultaneously. The room had but a single occupant. That occupant was Bill Barnes, sitting eating at a table, squarely between them.

"Hello, Bill," said Kane.

"How are you?" responded Bill, a big piece of corn-cake in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.

"Bill," pursued the Trooper, "we are officer of the State Police. I think you'll admit we've got you this time."

Bill Barnes gave the two men a long look. Rose had forgotten to slouch by now, and Kane had let his mouth go its own way. Then the wild man did a peculiar thing. Without a motion toward his side-arms, still clutching his rations, he swung around in his chair, and presented his feet to the view of his visitors.

"Look at them soles!" said he. "Look at them holes! That's come from running over the mountains. You fellows keep me on the jump. I'm tired of it. I'm glad, since it's you, that you've caught me. But,"——and his face darkened——"if it had been that constable down in the Valley that tried it, *I'd a killed him just as sure as I breathe.*

Can I have time to finish this meal?"

"Sure. Eat all you want," said Kane.

When he had done, the two Troopers took him in their

buggy down to the valley town. All the way he chatted pleasantly, running over the incidents of the chase just ended, and he offered no resistance at all.

But in the valley, infinitely as the people rejoiced in his capture, mild as he now seemed, no one wanted to handle Bill Barnes. They knew that what he had just protested as to their constable, for example, was the bare truth.

"One more job, then, for the crew of the Captain's gig!" said Rose.

And so, next day, a Trooper, officially off duty, accompanied by Trooper Kane, who was never off duty, being responsible for all, took Bill to Chambersburg, the county town, and delivered him into the hands of the Law. And the Law sent him to prison for a term of years.

The continuous warp of quarantine service, with all that it involved, was thus overlaid by a woof almost as continuous of incidental criminal work. Only men in the pink of condition and the prime of youth, imbued with a devoted spirit of service, could have stood the long strain. But these men, one and all, were inspired with the true spirit of the Force. They felt a keen resentment of the pretension of their own physical needs to limit their work. They desired, above all things, to meet every call, and that in the end, when this page was turned, it should stand as a record of good work, faithfully done in heaping measure to the honor of the Squadron.

Endless were the burdens so cast upon the State Police officers. Crop thieves and cattle thieves to catch; chicken-stealing to stop and punish; highway robbers to be found and arrested; yeggmen to be seized, and all superimposed on the quarantine work, not one iota of which could even be abated. No proper request, moreover, was refused, when a man remained available to respond to it.

Little by little, by steady progress, the pestilence sank, the death rate lowered. But not until three months had passed was the quarantine raised. Then, in an hour, off rode Trooper Kane and his men, 'cross country in a hurry on a new mission, this time to exorcise burglars from clamoring Huntington County.

KATHERINE MAYO.